
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6507

AN ACT CONCERNING A SLIDING TUITION SCALE FOR PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS OFFERED AT INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

SUMMARY:

This bill uses a multi-year approach to change the way the state permits preschool tuition charges by interdistrict magnet schools operated by regional education service centers (RESC). Under current law, the RESCs can charge tuition to the district where the student resides. The tuition is the difference between the per-student cost of education at the magnet school and the per-student state grant to the school. By FY 2015, the bill allows the school to charge tuition to the parents of the preschool student on a sliding scale, with the State Department of Education (SDE) paying for whatever the sliding scale does not cover.

It also requires SDE to submit a report to the Education Committee by February 1, 2014 on the levels of diversity and integration for each public school located in the *Sheff* region.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013, except the provisions requiring the creation of the sliding scale tuition for parents and the report by SDE to the Education Committee are upon passage.

SLIDING TUITION SCALE

Under the bill, SDE, in consultation with the Department of Social Services, must annually develop a sliding tuition scale based on family income to calculate the amount that a RESC operating an interdistrict magnet school offering a preschool program may charge for tuition to the parent or guardian of an enrolled child. This sliding scale tuition will be applied to FY 2015 and each following fiscal year.

Multi-Year Tuition Phase-in

The bill uses a multi-year approach to change the way the state permits RESC-operated magnet schools that have preschool programs can charge tuition for the preschool children. Under current law, the RESCs can charge tuition to the district where the student resides.

While the bill has a slightly different phase-in for RESC magnet schools in the *Sheff* region compared with RESC magnets outside the *Sheff* region, the tuition calculation is the same for both. The tuition cannot be more than the difference between (1) the average per-pupil expense for the magnet school and (2) the per-student state grant under law plus any revenue from any other source on a per-student basis. For RESC magnets in the Hartford area, the tuition amount ranged from \$2,900-\$3,800 for the 2011-12 school year.

The *Sheff* region is defined as the Avon, Bloomfield, Canton, East Granby, East Hartford, East Windsor, Ellington, Farmington, Glastonbury, Granby, Hartford, Manchester, Newington, Rocky Hill, Simsbury, South Windsor, Suffield, Vernon, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Windsor and Windsor Locks school districts. This region is the group of towns affected by the *Sheff v. O'Neill* court ruling and stipulation regarding racial desegregation of Hartford and its surrounding towns (see BACKGROUND).

Table 1 below presents the bill's changes to the tuition for magnets outside the *Sheff* region.

Table 1: Parties Responsible for Tuition Outside Sheff Region

	<i>Current Law</i>	<i>Bill</i>	
Non-Sheff RESC Magnet School Preschool Programs	School Districts where student resides	FYs 13 and 14: SDE	FY 15 and each following fiscal year: parent or guardian of the child, with SDE responsible for any amount not covered by parent or guardian due to the sliding scale

Table 2 below presents the bill's changes to the tuition for magnets inside the *Sheff* region.

Table 2: Parties Responsible for Tuition in Sheff Region

	<i>Current Law</i>	<i>Bill</i>		
Sheff Region RESC Magnet School Preschool Programs	School Districts where student resides	FY 13: Prohibited from charging tuition	FY 14: SDE	FY 15 and each following fiscal year: parent or guardian of the child, with SDE responsible for any amount not covered by parent or guardian due to the sliding scale

It is unclear how the FY 13 provisions would work considering the provisions take effect in FY 14.

The bill permits the education commissioner to conduct a comprehensive review of the operating budget of any magnet school charging tuition to verify the tuition rate.

The bill removes the ability of the Great Path Academy at Manchester Community College, which is operated by the Hartford School District, to charge preschool tuition. (Great Path currently does not offer preschool.)

SHEFF REPORT

SDE must submit a report, by February 1, 2014, to the Education Committee on the levels of diversity and integration for each public school located in the *Sheff* region. The report must include (1) the number and percentage of minority students in each such school and (2) an analysis of how this data relates to the state's efforts to meet the goals of the 2008 *Sheff* court stipulation and order.

BACKGROUND

Sheff v. O'Neill Court Decision and Settlement

Following the state Supreme Court's 1996 ruling (*Sheff v. O'Neill*) that Hartford students were racially and economically isolated, the state has agreed to a number of steps to reduce racial isolation including the most recent 2008 stipulation. Interdistrict magnet schools are part of the voluntary desegregation plan. The districts within the *Sheff* region are those primarily involved in desegregation efforts.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 25 Nay 0 (03/28/2013)